

funding the troops and supporting them, giving them direction, but I don't think we ought to be passing judgment about when is the best time to pull our troops back.

We are moving in a direction that will enable us to do that, and I believe that our commanders have made it clear that as they see the Iraqi military stand up, as the government stands up, it is only a matter of time before our troops will be able to stand down, and we will begin to draw down some of our troop strengths in the region.

I make that point because, as I mentioned earlier, popular support is waning for the conflict and people are weary and they are frustrated as they see lives lost and they see the cost of the war, but at the same time I think they realize we have a mission to complete there. We listen to the people across the country, but it is also important to listen to what the troops are saying.

Whenever I travel, when I go to Iraq, when I listen to troops who have returned from Iraq, when I talk with National Guard units in South Dakota that have been deployed there, and, frankly, even when I discuss with families who have lost loved ones in Iraq their thoughts about the work we are doing there and whether we are making a difference, I consistently ask the questions: Do you believe we are making a difference? Do you believe progress is being made? Do you believe we are doing the right thing?

I try to ask those questions separate from—and especially when I am traveling into Iraq—the structured settings in which I would get a response—I wouldn't say a canned response but a response that might be less than completely forthright. I ask troops in different situations.

I remember when I was in Iraq in Baghdad the last time, I got up early in the morning and went to the fitness center and worked out in the weight room with a lot of our troops and visited, interacted with them, and asked their opinions on issues. Clearly, there is a belief, I think, that the work there is hard, that the work there has been costly, that people would like to be back home with their families but at the same time who understand the stakes of what they are doing and believe profoundly in the mission and the work we are doing at winning the war on terror.

As I said before, I think we have to, as we listen to this debate, keep in mind that the stakes are very high because it is not just about freedom and democracy in Iraq, as good as that objective may be, it is also about, in a broader sense, the national security of future generations of Americans.

I happen to believe that the war on terror is sort of our, as they used to say, rendezvous with destiny, that many generations that have come before have had to battle evil. We had World War II and Nazism and all the

characters of that time who wanted to kill and destroy and maim people. And since that time we have fought the Cold War. It has taken a certain amount of resolve in every one of those circumstances to prevail. But in either of those circumstances had we not had that resolve, had there not been freedom-loving people and leadership committed to finishing that mission, we could be living in a very different world.

They met, in their generation's time, the challenge that was put before them to make the world a safer and more secure place for future generations. That was true in World War II, that was true in the Cold War, and that is true today in the war on terror. I believe it is our time and our generation's, if you want to call it struggle between good and evil, and we have a responsibility to the people of this country and to freedom-loving people everywhere to make sure we do not fail in succeeding, in winning the war against terror, to ensure that future generations do not have to live in constant fear, in constant threat, and perhaps dealing with thugs such as al-Zarqawi and others who want to do evil and want to kill, want to destroy, and have nothing but the worst of intentions for the people of this country and people elsewhere around the world.

Mr. President, this amendment will be voted on tomorrow. I know the Senator from Massachusetts has time to talk about his amendment later. And the Levin amendment will also be voted on. I appreciate and believe it is appropriate for us to have this debate, especially in the context of the Defense authorization bill, where we are debating national security. This is a debate we have every year. I think it is very appropriate to have this discussion.

I don't question the motivations or intentions of people who bring these amendments; I think just in terms of their judgment, it is wrong. I don't think we can telegraph to our enemies what our strategies are. I believe it is important we complete the mission, that we listen to those commanders, those generals, those troops on the ground day in and day out, fighting the good fight, trying to protect our citizens in this country and around the world and future generations from what I believe is a very real, very serious threat to our security as we go forward.

Mr. President, I see that the Senator from Kansas is on the floor. I will be happy, if he is prepared at this time to make his remarks, to yield such time to him as he may consume. We have others who will be joining us in the Chamber. I, at this time, yield to the Senator from Kansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from South Dakota for yielding time to me on this very important topic that we are dealing with today, and I also thank my

colleagues from Massachusetts and from Michigan for raising these issues.

As Senator THUNE was stating, this is an important debate. It is time we had this debate. It is the right vehicle for us to have this debate, and I think it is helpful for us to have this debate for the United States as we move forward.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, can I inquire how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 25½ minutes remaining.

Mr. KERRY. I thank the Chair.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, it is time we had this debate and time we had this debate in front of the people of the United States and in front of the world. Rest assured that the terrorists are watching this debate. Those who seek harm for us in Iraq and in many regions of the world are watching this debate, and they are testing and sensing our sense of resolve or lack of resolve in this war on terrorism.

They are very much playing off us and saying the weakness of the United States is its willingness to stay the course or its lack of resolve or the shifting of public opinion, and that is what they drive at more than anything else, seeing that the weakest part of the U.S. military is public opinion, U.S. public opinion, so that our forces are not defeated on the battlefield. We have lost valiant soldiers, but we win the battles. What they are targeting is weakening U.S. public opinion and U.S. resolve. That is what they are targeting with the attacks, with the IEDs, with the roadside bombs. It is not going force on force and saying: OK, we are going to drive Americans out of this portion of Iraq; we are going to keep them out of this particular area. Much of it is saying: Look, we know the United States. We know they are a democracy. They respond to public opinion. What we have to do is have this be costly enough to the United States in American blood that public opinion shifts and they pull away. And once they leave, we take over. So their actual target is U.S. public opinion.

We need to disappoint the terrorists on that particular issue, that U.S. public opinion and U.S. resolve remains in place to see this through.

We are in a decades-long struggle with terrorism. It had been going on since before we had the attack on 9/11. It had been going on for a decade prior to that. We had the attack on Khobar Towers. We had the USS *Cole* attack. We had two embassies in Africa attacked. Hit, hit, hit, and ineffective, feckless responses on our part I think further emboldened the terrorists to take this even further. Hit, no response; hit, ineffective response; hit, ineffective response; and then 9/11, and after that, there was no way you were going to stop the United States from responding. We said: Look, that is it, we are going and we are going to deal with this. We went into Afghanistan, the headquarters. And after that we said: Where else are terrorists working out of? And the war effort moved to Iraq.